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Performance Criteria Development for Army Field Recruiters

↪ A variety of measures which have served as criteria of recruiter performance are discussed. New approaches to productivity measurement are developed to reflect both the relative value of different recruits to the Army and the influence of area fertility on recruiter productivity. Recent ARI research on FY79 productivity of 612 Army recruiters is presented. The large influence of District Recruiting Command fertility on individual recruiter productivity (accounting for 32% of the variance) was found to be primarily due to low priority recruits (those recruits who have low AFQT scores and/or did not get a high school diploma): DRC average production accounts for 34% of the variance in production of low priority recruits while it accounts for less than 9% of variance in production of high priority recruits. Managerial implications of area fertility adjustments of recruiter production are discussed. Recruiter reactions to performance appraisal adjustments for DRC fertility are considered.  
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Field Recruiters

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For both day-to-day operations and for long range planning, the development and utilization of recruiter performance criteria is of vital concern to managers of recruiting forces. Under the all Volunteer Force, the role of the military service recruiter has increased in importance and recruiting managers have felt the need to improve recruiter productivity. A key issue in improving recruiter productivity is how to measure recruiter productivity. We are concerned in this paper with two major changes in recruiting that have caused us to re-evaluate the way individual recruiter performance is measured.

The first major change is related to the increased importance of the individual recruiter since the cessation of the draft. Department of the Army demands placed upon the Army Recruiting Command are adjudicated thru three levels of this Command and ultimately placed on individual recruiters through monthly recruiting requirements. With no draft to make up shortfalls and to motivate individuals to enlist, the Command's concern with individual recruiter productivity increased exponentially. Thus, performance criteria for recruiters narrowed from a broad concern with the recruiter as a soldier representing the military in a civilian community to a focus on the number of enlistments each month he or she could produce. Congressional concern with the quality of enlistees in the Army has been translated by the Recruiting Command to monthly recruiting requirements assigned to each Army recruiter. The monthly mission box assigned each recruiter is a three dimensional matrix of the number of Non Prior Service individuals the recruiter is to contract by recruit gender, education level and Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) category, as well as a separate category of Prior Service applicants. Education level specifies individuals as being High School Diploma Graduates (HSDG), High School Seniors (HSSR), or Non High School Graduates (NHSG). AFQT category specifies whether the person is at or below the 31st percentile on the Armed Forces Qualification Test.

The increased emphasis on individual recruiter productivity is the concern of researchers both from the perspective of developing criteria for recruiter management research (e.g., efforts to find improved recruiter selection and assignment factors) and from the perspective of the understanding and acceptance individual recruiters have of the performance criteria used to evaluate them.

Role ambiguity and conflict which can result from the setting of performance standards are important concerns in personnel management. Role ambiguity refers to the degree to which an individual actually understands

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what is required on the job. This is different from role conflict in which the individual understands the competing demands which are being made but may be unable to resolve which demands are more important. Role ambiguity and conflict have been found to be related to negative states such as dissatisfaction, stress, impaired performance and inappropriate organizational behavior (Rizzo, House, & Lertzman, 1970; Schuler, Aldag, & Brief, 1977; Keller, 1975).

The second major change that is leading to re-evaluation of performance criteria for recruiters is the need to develop criteria which are truly reflective of an individual's performance, and not merely reflective of large differences in task difficulty associated with geopolitical and socioeconomic factors of the recruiter's assigned area. For example, Bennett and Haber (Note 1) found that an urban or rural assignment was an important variable determining enlistment success of Marine recruiters. In another study of Marine recruiters, Larriva (Note 2) found that multiple correlations between various predictors of recruiter success and evaluations of recruiter's performance improved when geographic and rural vs. urban characteristics were controlled. Criterion research conducted for the Army during 1973 and 1974 was broadly focused on differences in recruiting "territory fertility". To account for fertility differences, individual performance was expressed as a deviation from the mean performance in the individual's territory (Fischl, Note 3). Average number of recruits per recruiter in a District Recruiting Command (DRC) was shown to account for 48% of the criterion variance of number of accessions (Brown, Wood & Harris, Note 4). While these findings demonstrate the importance of taking geopolitical and socioeconomic variables into account in criterion development, research remains to be done on exactly which predictor variables are important to measure and how to use them in criterion development.

Demographic variables are currently used in market analyses to determine the number of Qualified Military Applicants (QMA) in each recruiting station's area. The QMA is used to determine the mission requirements for each station. Thus area socioeconomic factors indirectly influence one performance criterion: the percent of mission objective the recruiter actually achieves. Here again we see a strong potential for role ambiguity and lack of acceptance of the relatively subtle way that "fertility" now influences the establishment of performance criteria. An even greater potential for conflict exists if performance criteria are explicitly based on area fertility.

In this paper we focus on how field recruiters and their immediate supervisors (recruiting station commanders) feel about the current performance criteria used for Army recruiters and how they feel about alternative criteria that might be used. Specifically, we investigated the level of recruiter and station commander understanding and acceptance of current criteria, their preference for other criteria and their reactions to adjusting performance on the basis of DRC "fertility."

#### Methods

Data reported in this paper are preliminary. They include only 22 of 50 recruiting stations to be contacted. This data collection effort will be completed in early November 1981. Complete details of subject selection and all procedures can be obtained from the authors.

Respondents were 44 recruiters and 22 station commanders from the Western, Midwestern, and Southwestern Army Recruiting Regions of the United States. Two recruiters and the station commander were individually interviewed in each of two stations in each of eleven DRCs.

Performance measurement was the first substantive issue covered in all these interviews. After the respondents were asked about problems encountered in filling out our questionnaires and suggested improvements in the surveys, the interviewer raised the topic of performance rating. Respondents were asked to read a description of a modified performance rating system that could be used to compare recruiting performance of recruiters in the different DRC's (see Appendix 1). After being given the DRC Correction<sup>1</sup> for their DRC each respondent was asked how they would react to such a system being used.

Respondents were then asked to describe how they believe field recruiter performance is rated now. This was followed by a question asking recruiters and station commander how they would like to see field recruiter performance rated. Finally, respondents were asked to pick one measure as the best measure of field recruiter performance. The measures they were asked to choose from had been included in their surveys. Station commanders had previously rated each recruiter by an experimental performance report which included the questions in Appendix 2. Each recruiter had also rated themselves on these items.

## Results

Information gathered in the interviews of recruiters and station commanders are presented below. We first present the information gathered on respondent's reactions to a modified performance rating system which adjusted contract totals for DRC fertility. Next we present how station commanders and recruiters believe recruiters' performance is currently rated and how they would like to see it rated. Finally, we present the measures recruiters and station commanders feel are the best measures of recruiter performance.

### Reactions to a Modified Rating System

Overall, 23% of respondents (18% of commanders, 26% of recruiters) accepted the system of DRC corrections. The largest group of respondents (62% overall, 77% of commanders and 53% of recruiters) rejected a system of DRC corrections because it did not go far enough and adjust for "within DRC" fertility differences. Thus 85% of respondents indicated an initial

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<sup>1</sup>DRC corrections were computed on a 1979-80 base for a six month production period as follows:  $\text{Correction}_i = 6(\overline{\text{DRCV}} - \text{DRCV}_i)$ , where  $\text{DRCV}_i$  is the DRC's average monthly contract production per recruiter in a ten month base period.

acceptance of some type of area fertility adjustments. However, 15% of the recruiters rejected fertility adjustments on the basis of their assertion that productivity depends only upon the recruiter--his or her effort or sales ability. Nine percent of the respondents (14% of commanders and 7% of recruiters) indicated that the system was unfair because it would take contract credit away from recruiters in DRCs above average in productivity. This concern was not raised by the other respondents.

#### Current and Preferred Rating Systems

In the performance measurement interview, respondents were asked how field recruiter performance is now rated and how they would like to see it rated (the second and third interview questions respectively). Responses to these questions were coded in two ways. First, respondents' views of current and preferred rating methods were coded for agreement or disagreement. Second, the current and preferred rating methods were each coded in three specific ways. The specific codings for each were: a) the relative importance of production numbers versus other performance criteria; b) the relative importance of total contract production versus categories of enlistees in the mission box; and c) type of criteria other than production numbers (e.g., recruiter effort).

Of the 64 respondents who could be coded, 70% (74% of station commanders, 68% of recruiters) described a preferred rating of field recruiter performance which was different from the system which they believe is currently used.

Table 1

#### Perceived Importance of Criteria of Field Recruiter Performance by Percentage of Respondents

Criteria Importance Coding	Current		Preferred	
	Station Commanders n=22	Recruiters n=42	Station Commanders n=20	Recruiters n=40
Production numbers only	77	81	30	45
Numbers and other criteria - Numbers more important	14	14	0	8
Numbers and other criteria - Equal Importance	4	2	10	22
Numbers and other criteria - Other criteria more important	0	2	30	5
Other criteria only	4	0	30	20
	99%	99%	100%	100%

Table 1 shows that the vast majority of recruiters and station commanders believe that production numbers are the most important measure of recruiter performance under the current system. This table also shows that the respondents would prefer to de-emphasize production numbers in measuring recruiter performance. Furthermore, station commanders and recruiters differ in the emphasis they place on numbers in their preferred criteria ( $\chi^2 = 10.2$ , 4df,  $p < .04$ ). Surprisingly, recruiters are less likely to reject production numbers as a preferred criteria than are station commanders.

Table 2  
Perceptions of Productions Numbers as Criteria for Field  
Recruiter Performance by Percentage of Respondents

Production Number Criteria Importance	Current		Preferred	
	Station Commanders n=22	Recruiters n=44	Station Commanders n=22	Recruiters n=44
Numbers not mentioned or said to be unimportant	13	2	48	30
Unspecified Production Numbers	39	35	35	30
----- Specified Production Numbers -----				
Total contracts only	9	28	9	16
Contracts and mission box - Contracts more important	13	9	0	12
Contracts and mission box - Equally important	13	14	4	5
Contracts and mission box - Mission box more important	0	5	0	0
Mission box only	13	7	4	7
	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 2 presents the respondents view on production figures as performance criteria. The first row of this table reiterates the previous finding that the respondents preferred ratings less dependent on contract production figures than they perceive the current ratings to be. The results presented in this table also indicate that while respondents agree on the importance of production figures as measures of performance, they do not agree on which particular production figures are important. This lack of agreement on production figures is found in both station commanders and recruiters in both their understanding of the current rating system and in their preferred rating

system.

Table 3

Frequency of Criteria Other Than Production Figures

<u>Criteria</u>	<u>Current</u>	<u>Preferred</u>
Attitude	3	1
Appearance	3	0
Paperwork	2	0
Credibility, knowledge as recruiter	1	1
Effort, volume of applicants worked	4	10
Supervisor ratings	2	19
Quality of enlistees but not by mission box	0	5
Not on a month by month basis	0	4

The final coding of current and preferred ratings was for performance measures not using production figures as criteria. Table 3 lists eight criteria which were cited by two or more respondents. Four other responses were made only by one individual and are not listed here. Station commanders and recruiters differed only in the extent to which they preferred supervisory ratings. Only 14% of recruiters selected supervisory ratings as the preferred performance measure while 44% of the station commanders preferred this measure.

Best Measures of Recruiter Performance

The last question on performance measures asked respondents to look at the questions in Appendix 2 and choose one of these questions as the best measure of field recruiter performance. Table 4 presents the percentage of station commanders and recruiters who choose each suggested measure as the best measure of recruiter performance. Suggested measures can be grouped into six general categories as shown in Table 4. There were sharp differences between recruiters and station commanders on what recruiters can and should be held responsible for. Twenty-five percent of the respondents choosing an applicant processing measure emphasized that the recruiter lacks control over the quality of the people he/she processes and over whether an individual will contract. Thirty-six percent of the respondents chose "total contracts" or "contracts as a percentage of the contract objectives" as the best measure of recruiter performance because it is "what the job is all about". While many recruiters communicated a concern with the issue of "quality" recruits, only 22% of the respondents felt certain enough about a recruiter's responsibility and/or ability to influence recruit quality, to choose a quality indicator as the best measure of recruiter performance.

Table 4

Percentage of Respondents Choosing Each Measure as the  
Best Measure of Performance

Measures	Station Commanders n=22	Recruiters n=42
Overall Ratings		
1. 5-pt scale	5	2
17. 7-pt scale	0	0
18. Enlisted Evaluation Report	5	a
Applicant Processing		
2. Contacted for at least 20 min.	9	14
3. Test	5	7
4. Send for physical	0	2
5. Send for contracting	9	2
Contracts and Mission Objective		
6. Contracts	18	24
7. % of objective	9	17
Delayed Entry Program (DEP)		
8/9. Number of DEP losses	0	2
Objective Quality of Enlistees		
10. High School Diploma Graduates	9	0
11. AFQT I thru IIIa	0	0
12. HSDG and AFQT I thru IIIa	0	2
Subjective Quality of Enlistees		
13. Quality service for term of enlistment	5	10
14. They are right for Army	0	14
15. Army right for them	0	0
16. Become quality NCOs	0	0
	<u>74%</u>	<u>96%</u>
More than one response	<u>27</u>	<u>2</u>
	101%	98%

Note: Wording of measures for commander is in Appendix 2.

<sup>a</sup>This question was not on the recruiter self report

## Discussion

Before examining the views of station commanders and field recruiters on new recruiter performance measures, it is best to examine their understanding and degree of acceptance of current performance criteria.

### Role Ambiguity: Understanding of Current Ratings

Role ambiguity is concerned with the degree to which an individual understands what is required on the job. Recruiters and station commanders seem to be in agreement that field recruiter performance is currently rated primarily on monthly contract production. However, role ambiguity does seem to exist with respect to what extent current performance criteria are based on total contracts only or on achieving the mission box objectives. We cannot currently tell whether this ambiguity is due to individual recruiter or station commander lack of awareness or interest or to some recent shift in Command emphasis that has not been clearly communicated to the recruiters and station commanders.

### Person-Role Conflict: Acceptance of Ratings

While many respondents stated that they did not know how field recruiter performance could be rated differently from the way it is currently rated, 70% of the respondents did express a preference for a rating method which differed from their perception of the current method. Station commanders in particular said they would like to see less use of production figures and more use of the criteria used in other Army assignments (e.g. supervisor ratings of the total person or soldier). Recruiters sought more recognition of their efforts and skills in working with applicants. These results indicate a role conflict among recruiters between their identity as U.S. Army soldiers and the performance criteria placed on them as U.S. Army recruiters.

A different sort of person-role conflict was expressed by the 17% of the respondents who choose a subjective enlistee quality measure as the best measure of recruiter performance. Many recruiters express a conflict between having to make total contract production numbers and their personal desire to enlist only individuals whom they feel are right for the Army.

### Importance of Role Ambiguity and Conflict

The amount of role ambiguity and role conflict which we found warrants further efforts to understand the organizational environment of the field recruiter.

Indications of the importance of role conflict and role ambiguity in decreased organizational effectiveness are to be found in the general literature. Keller (1975) found employee dissatisfaction to increase with role ambiguity. Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman (1970) suggested that role conflict and ambiguity resulted in stress, and that this stress, in turn, resulted in dissatisfaction, poor performance and generally inappropriate organizational behavior. Schuler, Aldag, & Brief (1977) also found role conflict and ambiguity to be related to negative affective states such as dissatisfaction and stress.

All the recruiter's problems cannot be solved by eliminating role

ambiguity or conflict. For example, establishing clear performance criteria based only on the single criterion of production numbers could push the recruiter toward malpractice. Such pressure might be reduced by placing more emphasis on performance criteria associated with being an honest, hard-working soldier.

#### Shifting Role Emphasis for Recruiters and Acceptance of New Measures

Much of the ambiguity in respondents' perceptions of current performance ratings may be related to a newly emerging role for recruiters. Recent command emphasis on the quality of enlistees and recruiter "ownership" of enlistees seems to mark the beginning of a shift from the role of the Army recruiter as a seller to anyone who is willing to buy, to a role as a personnel recruiter seeking out the best applicants for the jobs the Army needs to fill. This new emphasis is seen by the respondents to conflict with the long standing criteria of total contract numbers. Recruiters report many conflicting demands being placed on them concerning the number and quality of applicants they should be seeking.

#### Development of Performance Criteria: Research Needs

Researchers in this area need to be aware of the current flux in recruiting performance criteria if they are to know the limits on their work. A recruiter who may be extremely successful in accomplishing the performance criteria as he or she perceives them may not be considered successful in accomplishing the criteria perceived by the researcher. Because of the emergence of recruit quality as an essential component of recruiter performance evaluation, research is needed on the effect of geopolitical and socioeconomic variables not only on total productivity but also on categories of productivity.

In the current research, we found that fertility adjustments are acceptable to most recruiters and station commanders if the adjustments are sufficiently explained and are done at a small enough level. These adjustments, however, would almost certainly be better done as adjustments to the standards of mission box objectives, rather than as adjustments to contract performance outcomes. While most recruiters and station commanders can accept the logic for area fertility adjustments in judging performance, they were less than enthusiastic about subtracting a DRC correction number from the number of contracts produced. Any system which reduces the number of contracts a recruiter is credited with, would be perceived as unfair and would probably lead to decreased motivation.

#### Reference Notes

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# EXPERIMENTAL PERFORMANCE RATING

This is only an Experimental Form. Our purpose is to obtain your comments on designing a system which is fair to all recruiters.

Many of the possible causes of recruiting performance are beyond the control of recruiters and are simply a part of the area an individual is recruiting in. USAREC is interested in the effects of expressing a recruiter's productivity in a way that is adjusted by the fertility of an individual recruiter's DRC. It is hoped that an adjustment to productivity based on DRC's fertility will allow a more accurate comparison of recruiters from around the country. If a recruiter's productivity is adjusted for his or her DRC average productivity, all recruiters in the country can be more easily evaluated on individual achievement.

One possible adjustment is to add to a recruiter's number of contracts the difference between the national average number of contracts and the average number of contracts in his/her DRC.

## COMPUTING ADJUSTED PERFORMANCE SCORES

An Adjusted Performance Score (AP Score) expresses what your performance would be expected to be if you were recruiting in an area of average productivity. Adding a correction means that your performance would go up in an area of average fertility, since you are now working in a DRC of below average fertility. Subtracting a correction means that your performance would go down in a DRC of average fertility, since you are now working in an area of above average fertility and recruiting is easier than it is in an average DRC.

### EXAMPLES

John is a recruiter in a productive DRC. Of the individuals he recruited and sent to an AFES in the last six months, 21 signed enlistment contracts. His Adjusted Performance Score would look like this:

Number of contracts:	21
DRC Correction:	-5
Adjusted Performance Score	16

Joe is a recruiter in a DRC that is less productive than the average. He recruited 11 people in the last six months who signed contracts. Joe's AP Score would look like this:

Number of contracts:	11
DRC Correction	+6
Adjusted Performance Score:	17

If we do not take DRC fertility into account and just compare John and Joe on contract totals, John looks like a much better recruiter than Joe. But by using DRC Corrections to get Adjusted Performance Scores we can see that Joe and John are both producing at about the same level. In an area of average fertility we would expect very little difference in performance between Joe and John; the big difference we see between their current performance levels is attributed to how easy it is to recruit in John's DRC and how difficult it is to recruit in Joe's DRC.

## Performance Report for Last Six Months

In this section there are a number of statements and questions about this recruiter's performance during the last six months. Think over the last six months and answer each question with your best estimate.

1. All in all, her/his job performance in recruiting is
    1. Excellent
    2. Above Average
    3. Average
    4. Below Average
    5. Poor
  2. \_\_\_\_\_ In the last six months, how many prospects has he/she had at least twenty minutes contact with?
  3. \_\_\_\_\_ In the last six months, how many applicants did he/she send to take the ASVAB?
  4. \_\_\_\_\_ In the last six months, how many applicants did he/she send to an AFES for a physical?
  5. \_\_\_\_\_ In the last six months, how many applicants did he/she send to an AFES to see a guidance counselor?
  6. \_\_\_\_\_ In the last six months, how many people he/she recruited and sent to an AFES signed a contract?
  7. \_\_\_\_\_ In the last six months, what percentage of objective did he/she make?
- OF THE SIGNED RECRUITS FROM THE LAST SIX MONTHS,
8. \_\_\_\_\_ How many dropped out of DEP?
  9. \_\_\_\_\_ How many more do you think will drop out of DEP?
10. \_\_\_\_\_ How many counted for him/her as high school diploma graduates?
  11. \_\_\_\_\_ How many scored above the 49th percentile (categories I thru IIIA) on the APQT?
  12. \_\_\_\_\_ How many BOTH scored above the 49th percentile AND were counted for her/him as a diploma graduate?
  13. \_\_\_\_\_ How many do you expect to contribute quality service to the Army and not attrite before the end of their contract?
  14. \_\_\_\_\_ How many do you feel are right for the Army?
  15. \_\_\_\_\_ How many do you feel the Army is the right place for during the period of their contract?
  16. \_\_\_\_\_ How many do you think are going to become the quality career MCO's the Army needs?
  17. During the last six months, how would you rate his/her performance as an Army Recruiter?
 

COMPLETE FAILURE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	COMPLETE SUCCESS
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  18. \_\_\_\_\_ E&R you would give him/her for last six months.